

POLI 2051 Introduction to American Government

Fall 2021

2:30-3:20pm, Mondays, Wednesdays, and
Fridays

Location: Coates 127

Instructor: Max Magaña

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Virtual Office Hours: 3:30-4:30pm, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays

Office: Stubbs 332, Department of Political Science

Just because you do not take an interest in politics doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you.

Pericles, statesman in Ancient Greece

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is intended to introduce students to the fundamentals of American government and politics. Topics are divided into four broad categories. The first category focuses on the ideological, historical, socioeconomic, and constitutional contexts of politics in the United States. The second category focuses on political processes, including interest groups, political parties, and elections. The third category focuses on the institutions of government (executive, legislative, and judicial branches) that create and implement public policies. The fourth category focuses on the public, which includes the media, public opinion, and voting. While this course focuses on national level politics, it also includes some aspects of state and local governments.

CORE CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES

The core curriculum requirement in political science is designed to communicate an understanding of the nature of governments and of the actions of people concerning government and public policy. Such a requirement is intended to inform students in order that they may function more effectively as responsible citizens in their community, state, and nation.

Required Text:

- O'Connor, Karen, Larry J. Sabato (2021) American Government: Roots and Reform, 2020 Presidential Election Edition, 14th edition. (Pearson).

GRADING POLICIES

- 1) Attendance and participation (10%)
- 2) Seven Quizzes (30%)
- 3) First mid-term examination (15%)
- 4) Second mid-term examination (15%)
- 5) Final examination (30%)

Letter grades are assigned as follows based on a student's point total:

A+ 97 ≥	B+ 87- 89	C+ 77- 79	D+ 67- 69	F <60
A 93- 96	B 83- 86	C 73- 76	D 63- 66	
A- 90- 92	B- 80- 82	C- 70- 72	D- 60- 62	

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Classes consist of lectures on the reading material assigned for each session. Lectures are intended to provide an in-depth discussion of the material—to elaborate on and clarify the reading material. Participation from students is very important and will count toward the final grade. Some material and lectures might be difficult, so feel free to ask questions in class. Quality participation is especially important if you are struggling because it indicates that you are putting in the effort to learn. Moreover, feel free to e-mail me and stop by during office hours. The general philosophy is that students who put in work and effort will be rewarded.

Final grades are based on attendance/participation, quizzes, and in-class examinations for a total of 100 points.

Quizzes: There will be 7 quizzes, which will be taken on Moodle. Quizzes will be held after we complete topics in class, so the quiz dates might change depending on our lectures. Quizzes will be open for 24 hours on Fridays and you will be given only one attempt. There are absolutely no makeups for missed quizzes. I reserve the right to change quizzes into in-class format if necessary. The lowest 2 quiz scores will be dropped.

Exams: The course consists of two in-class exams and an in-class final exam. The in-class exams will not be cumulative and could consist of a mix of multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions. The dates of all of these are provided in the “important dates” section of the syllabus, as well as on the reading calendar. Please review the **Student Evaluation and Policies** section and reach out to me if you have any confusion.

Course Schedule

Note that the schedule is subject to change and any changes will be noted in the “Announcements” section on Moodle.

PART I: FOUNDATION OF GOVERNMENT

Week 1 (08/23) Introduction; American Roots, Context, & Culture.

Week 2 (08/30) The Constitution; Quiz 1 (Friday, 09/03)

Week 3 (09/06) The Federal System.; Civil Liberties

Week 4 (09/13) Civil Liberties & Civil Rights. Quiz 2 (09/17)

Week 5 (09/20) Review. First Midterm Examination

PART II: INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT

Week 6 (09/27) Congress.

Week 7 (10/04) Congress; The Presidency. Quiz 3 (10/08)

Week 8 (10/11) Bureaucracy; Judiciary. Quiz 4 (10/15)

PART III POLITICAL BEHAVIOR

Week 9 (10/18) Political Party

Week 10 (10/25) Campaign, election, and voting. Quiz 5 (10/29)

Week 11 (11/01) The News Media.

Week 12 (11/08) Review. Second Midterm Exam

Week 13 (11/15) Public Opinion. Quiz 6 (11/19)

PART IV: PUBLIC POLICY

Week 14 (11/22) Social and Economic Policy.

Week 15 (11/29) Foreign and Defense Policy. Review day. Quiz 7 (12/03)

Week 16 (12/09) Final Exam. 12:30- 2:30 pm

How to Contact Me

The best way to contact me is by Moodle, but you can reach me through my email. I will normally respond within 24 hours during the normal workweek. I will also hold virtual office hours after class, but I invite you to speak with me immediately after class if that works for you. If you would like to set up a specific time to talk, e-mail me and we can schedule a time that is mutually convenient. The takeaway I wish to convey to you here is that I will try my best to accommodate you.

STUDENT EVALUATION AND POLICIES

Academic Integrity: Students are required to abide by the academic conduct policies outlined in the LSU Code of Student Conduct (<https://www.lsu.edu/saa/students/codeofconduct.php>). Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to: cheating on exams, plagiarizing, buying or selling assignments, altering grades, and collaborating with others without permission. All violations of the university's academic conduct policies are turned over to the Dean of Students for investigation and adjudication.

Classroom Decorum: Students are expected to read the assigned readings BEFORE class and to be respectful of their classmates and instructor. Simply put, please try to be professional. Please be mindful of others trying to listen, take notes, and participate. Please do not speak without permission or interject. Please make every effort to be on time to class, to be seated and ready to begin every class. If you cannot be on time (e.g., accidents), please contact me. Please mute all electronic devices. Disruptive students will be asked to leave immediately.

No audio or video recording devices are allowed unless special permission is granted by the instructor. Please do not take photographs of the overheads. This rule is strictly enforced during exams and during review of exam materials. All violations of this policy are turned over to the Dean of Students. You are free to use laptop computers and other electronic devices for class purposes (e.g., taking notes, looking up relevant information, etc.).

Disagreement is common in politics. Even Democrats disagree amongst themselves and not all Republicans agree with each other. Of course, though we share many similarities as Americans, we are still each different. Therefore, I expect students to treat each other with respect and tolerance. I will not tolerate disrespectful remarks of any kind, regardless of the subject matter. Just as tolerance and respect are crucial from democracy to the workplace, they are crucial in this class.

Late Assignments and Missed Work: Please make every effort to take scheduled exams and hand in work on time. With that said, I recognize that there are legitimate exceptions. The following reasons are some examples: a documented illness, a family emergency, or some severe mechanical failure (related to transportation, electronics, etc.). Please note that most job-related issues are not considered acceptable excuses (although see university regulations concerning military duties, official events, etc.). **Makeup exams will only be given under reasonable**

circumstances. The absence must be a university-excused absence (PS-22), and advanced notice (if possible—e.g., if not an accident) must be given. Makeup exams granted under these circumstances will only be made available for 48 hours after their scheduled time. I recognize that there are exceptions to this 48-hour rule (e.g., injury or illness), and I will accommodate accordingly

Accommodations: If you require accommodations, it is your responsibility to register for those accommodations and obtain the appropriate documentation from the Office of Disability Services. Please inform me of your situation as soon as possible (ideally, in the first week or two of the semester) so arrangements can be made. The website for the Office of Disability Services can be found at the following address:

<https://www.lsu.edu/disability/>



LSU strongly encourages all students, faculty and staff to get vaccinated for COVID-19. Visit www.lsu.edu/roadmap/vaccines/ to learn how to get vaccinated on campus. Vaccination helps keep our campus community safe, helps protect those among us who are most vulnerable to COVID-19, and is our path back to more normal operations and the full college experience that our students deserve.